

Amendments to the Specification:

Please replace the paragraph (or section) beginning at page 13, line 27, with the following redlined paragraph (or section):

Another embodiment of the present invention provides a method for identifying an agent that modulates sphingolipid metabolism, comprising culturing a mutant yeast strain with sphingosine in the absence and presence of a candidate agent under conditions and for a time sufficient to observe in said mutant yeast strain an altered level of either (i) at least one sphingolipid intermediate, or (ii) activity of at least one component of a sphingolipid pathway, wherein the mutant yeast strain comprises a null allele of at least one gene encoding a component of a sphingolipid pathway that results in an altered activity level of at least one sphingolipid pathway component, and wherein said mutant strain of yeast has been genetically altered to express at least one nonendogenous sphingolipid pathway component and wherein the mutant yeast strain exhibits growth inhibition in the presence of sphingosine; and comparing growth of the mutant yeast strain in the presence of the candidate agent to the growth of the mutant yeast strain in the absence of the candidate agent, wherein an increase in growth of the mutant yeast strain in the presence of the agent indicates the agent modulates sphingolipid metabolism. In one embodiment, the at least one gene comprises DPL1 (formerly BST1; dihydrosphingosine-1-phosphate lyase 1). In another embodiment the at least one gene comprises DPL1 and LCB4. In another embodiment, the nonendogenous sphingolipid pathway component comprises human SPHK1. In certain embodiments, the altered level of the sphingolipid intermediate in the presence of the candidate agent comprises a decrease in at least one LCBP. In one embodiment, the LCBP comprises sphingosine-1-phosphate. In another embodiment, the altered level of the activity of the sphingolipid pathway component in the presence of the candidate agent comprises a decrease in the human SPHK1 activity.

Please replace the paragraph (or section) beginning at page 17, line 3, with the following redlined paragraph (or section):

The present invention also provides a method for identifying an agent that modulates sphingolipid metabolism, comprising culturing a mutant yeast strain with an inducer in the absence and presence of a candidate agent under conditions and for a time sufficient to

observe in said mutant yeast strain an altered level of either (i) at least one sphingolipid intermediate, or (ii) activity of at least one component of a sphingolipid pathway, wherein the mutant yeast strain comprises a null allele of at least one gene encoding a component of a sphingolipid pathway that results in an altered activity level of at least one sphingolipid pathway component, and wherein said mutant strain of yeast has been genetically altered to express at least one nonendogenous sphingolipid pathway component under the control of a promoter that is induced by the inducer and wherein the mutant yeast strain exhibits growth inhibition in the presence of the inducer; and comparing the level of either (i) or (ii) in the mutant yeast strain cultured in the presence of the candidate agent to the level of either (i) or (ii) in the mutant yeast strain cultured in the absence of the candidate agent, wherein an altered level in the presence of the agent indicates the agent modulates sphingolipid metabolism. In certain embodiments, the altered level of said at least one sphingolipid intermediate comprises a decrease in LCBPs. In another embodiment the altered level of said activity of at least one component of a sphingolipid pathway comprises a decrease in the activity of said at least one nonendogenous sphingolipid pathway component. In yet another embodiment, the at least one nonendogenous sphingolipid pathway component comprises human SPHK1. In certain embodiments the at least one gene comprises DPL1. In another embodiment, the at least one gene comprises DPL1 and LCB4. In yet another embodiment, the at least one gene comprises DPL1, LCB4, and YSR2 (yeast sphingosine resistance 2).